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A SERMON

Preached before the
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Of the COLONY
OF
Connecticut

At *Hartford* in *NEW-ENGLAND*.

May 13. 1697.

BEING

The Day for Electing the GOVERNOUR,
DEPUTY GOVERNOUR and
ASSISTANTS, for that COLONY.

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Letter to,

Rev J V Higginson

now resident at

101 West 1st Street, Newbury



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Preach'd before the
GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the COLONY
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E Z E K. XIX. 14.

*And fire is gone out of a Rod of her Branches
 which hath devoured her fruit, so that she
 hath no strong Rod to be a Scepter to Rule
 This is a Lamentation, and shall be for
 Lamentation.*

WHatever Differences of Opinion there have been in the World, concerning either the Original, or Pre-eminence of those various Forms of Civil Government, that have been Extant in it, yet the Thing it self hath ever been esteem'd

f great necessity, and universally acknowledged, a Blessing of high Importance to the Weal of People: Inasmuch that the General Nature of Common-Weal, with the Specifications thereunto belonging, do necessarily relate to Civil Government, and the several kinds of it, as to their formal Cause; whence it seemeth, That in things of a Civil Nature, there could not without Government, be any such thing as a Common Good in the World. Most certain it is, that by this *Medium*, Divine Wisdom hath provided to give check to those wretched Principles, of Pride and Contradiction, Disorder and Confusion, which the first Rebellion hath unhappily brought into the hearts of men; As also to prevent those Exorbitant Practices, and Intollerable Doings, [the genuine Product of such Principles] which are destructive to the Peace, and ruinous to the Comforts of Mankind: So that, in truth, of all those Favours, which God in his most Gracious Providence, hath distributed for the common benefit of the Children of men, this of Civil Government, deserves to be reputed among the Principal; for that, both the Advantages of it, are of such vast Extent; reaching to the utmost limits of the Rational World: and the Benefits of it are so exceeding great; since it is this, which under God is our Safeguard from Evils, Domestick and Forreign, and secureth to us whatsoever is valuable in the World. And from the Experience that men have had of these

Benefits

Benefits, as well as from Gods Over-ruling Influence upon their Hearts, it comes to pass, that there is such a willingness and Disposition in the most, to submit to those Powers that God in his Providence placeth over them.

Indeed we read of those that *Despise the Government*, 2 Pet. 2. 10. who, in defiance of this Subjection, *Speak Evil of Dignities*; [And what Ordinance of God is there, that hath not met with such as dare despise and condemn it?] Yet that many, even of These, [whatever their presumption and willfulness, (which infamous Notes the Apostle doth there brand them with,) may prompt them to say, or do against Government specifically considered, or rather against the Person vested with it,] are not so void of common Understanding, as to condemn such Authority in General; appeareth, (if from no other Reason, yet at least) from the over wearing conceit they ordinarily have, of their own Abilities, to rectifie the Male Administrations of those that are in Authority, and so mend the Faults, they accuse the Government of, had they but their Advantages. It must be confessed, that some, such (I may call them) Monsters of Men and Sinners there have been, as have openly protested themselves Mortal Enemies, to the Nature and Being of Civil Government (loading it with the odious slanders, of an Antichristian Stratagem, Limb of the Beast, and such as these) But that man, who shall oppose the Furious Notions,

of such Frantick men, against the concurring
 voice of all Nations, consenting to the Necessity
 and Usefulness of this Ordinance, will truly me-
 rit the Character, which the Apostle in the 12th.
verse of that fore cited Chapter, gives those De-
 famers, *viz. Of Natural Bruit Beasts*; and justly
 incur the Judgment he declareth concerning
 them in that same verse; in those words, *Made*
to be taken and destroyed;---and shall utterly perish.
 And surely whatever Detractions from the Ho-
 nour and Excellency of Civil Authority, This or
 any other Set of Opposers, (blinded by their
 own willfulness) are guilty of; such as have
 wisdom to discern the Circumstances of Men in
 General, with the present State of these Mun-
 dane Affairs, can't but as highly magnifie it; As
 the great Buckler (when rightly managed) both
 of Religion and Property, and the best Expedi-
 ent to Save a People from becoming a Prey to
 those who hate them. The want of which Au-
 thority, (whether we understand it of a total
 Failure, or of an undue, lame, and ineffectual
 Management) hath ever been of fatal conse-
 quence, and opened a Gap for Ruin upon Ruin
 to break in upon a people. Whence, whosoever
 shall well weigh, the no less natural than usual
 Concomitants and Consequents of this State de-
 ficiency, and shall consider, what Irreligion and
 Profaneness, Unrighteousness, and Oppression,
 Disorder, and Confusion, do use to invade a
 People, when the Rod of Dominion is broken,

the Bands of Authority dissolved, and every man is his own King, will soon see reason to reckon Government in the prime Rank of God's Mercies. In the close of the Book of *Judges, Chap. ult. ult.* We have, as the *very* Reason, both of the great Abominations that had defiled the Land of *Israel*, and of the great Devastations that had raged in it, This given us; *In these Dayes there was no King (or Chief Magistrate) in Israel.*

Now, by how much greater the Blessing of Civil Government is (which is designed for the Prevention and Removal of those Grievances that are incident to men) by so much the more intollerable is it, when it is either not improved at all, or not to any good purpose or effect, or mis-improved; when, either Wit or Will to prosecute the Ends of Rule are wanting; and such as have the managing of it, are either Unskillful, & know not; or Weak, and cannot; or perverse and will not consult the Peace and Weal of those they bear rule over. Though the Calamities, and Confusions of Anarchy, are very dreadful, yet the Instances of such as have been ruined by the abuse, rather than the want of Civil Authority, are more frequent, and as formidable. It is a sad case that a People is in, when there are no Rods at all, for a Scepter to Rule and it is not much (if it be any thing) better when those Rods that are, are not strong Rods and those Scepters, Scepters of Righteousness. This hath a very ominous Aspect upon a People.

This affords a pleasing Prospect to their Enemies, and will not be long in bringing the whole State of their Affairs into a lamentable Confusion.

This is it which the Prophet in our Text observes, to be the miserable case of the State of *Judah*; They that once had Men of Piety, Wisdom, Truth and Majesty, to adorn the Throne of Sovereignty, and Seats of Justice, were brought to that deplorable pass, that they had not a strong Rod to Rule them. And this was, to all that understood the worth of so great a Mercy, or should feel the want of it, such matter of sorrow, that we have it ingeminated by the Prophet. *This is a Lamentation, and shall be for a Lamentation.*

. There are two things (mutually illustrating each the other) which from these words of the Prophet, may be recommended to your Consideration; and I hope not unsuitably to the present Occasion.

The first is, The much to be lamented Circumstances of a State or People, over whom, there are None, or None such as there should be, holding the Reins of Authority, with a just and steady, strong and impartial Hand: This is expressed; This is it which the Prophet so bewails.

The second is implied, *viz.* The Happiness of a People who have *Strong Rods, for Scepters to Rule them.* And so far as we shall find, (in the
handling

handling of these cases) either of them to be co-incident with our own, There will arise a variety of Duties, belonging to us respectively in our several Stations ; and those of great Importance, both for the preventing and removing of that Misery, and for the procuring and perpetuating this Happiness.

This Chapter (wherein is our Text) doth contain a Description of the Present, with the next Preceding State of the Kingdom of *Judab*, (ascending, as is generally concluded, as far as to the end of King *Josiab's* Reign) in a Twofold Parable.

The First, of a Lioness and her Whelps, catching the Prey, and devouring until they were taken in the Pit. From *verse 2.* to the *9th* inclusively. Which Parable refers to the Time of the Two Kings, successively following *Josiab* - *Jeboabaz* and *Jebojakim*.

The Second (from the *10th verse* to the end) of a Vine, fruitful and full of Branches, but pluck'd up at length and cast to the Ground. Which sets forth the augmented Miseries of that declining State, under the two next Kings *Jebojakin* and *Zedekiah*.

This last verse, seemeth to be not only a Narrative of the Low Ebb, that the Regal Authority of the Kings of *Judab*, was already fallen into ; (who were rather Princes than Kings, and those Tributaries to the King of *Babylon*) But also, a Prediction what a lamentable pass, the

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Civil Affairs of that Kingdom (already so perplexed) should come to, after *Zedekiah's* Captivity, which was now at Hand. Concerning which (to shew the certainty of it) the Prophet here speaks of it as already come: *And Fire is gone out, &c. which hath devoured her Fruit*: verified considerably by what they daily saw and sustained; but afterwards, more in those horrid Tumults, Murders and Confusions, that fell out in *Gedaliah's* Time; whom *Nebuchadnezzar* had appointed Governour over the Residue of the *Jews*, permitted to abide in the Land.

In the words themselves we may Observe,

1. How the *Judean* State came to be involved in these Calamities. *And Fire is gone out of a Rod of her Branches*. This was it which had ruined them: All the Fruits of this Vine, were by this means devoured.

2. The Calamity it self, here noted by the Prophet, in which they were involved. *So that she hath no Strong Rod, for a Scepter to Rule*.

3. The Prophets Reflection thereupon; *This is a Lamentation, and shall be for a Lamentation*: The two last I principally design to speak to.

The Political State of the *Jews*, is here resembled to us by a Vine; Their Kings (who were from among themselves, an ancient Blessing which God had promised them. *Deut. 17. 15.*) were the *Rods* of the *Branches* of this Vine; and these were They, that by their Sin and Folly, kindled the Fire which consumed, both themselves and
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the State. This is the Summ of the first part of the verse; And belongs, as to its Application, to the three Kings or Princes, preceding *Zedekiah* (all of them gross Idolaters :) And especially to *Zedekiah's* revolting from, and afterwards refusing to submit to the King of *Babylon*; (as the Prophet *Jeremiah* countelled him: *Fer.* 38. 17, 23.) This set Fire to the Rage of that Potent Monarch, and that Fire destroyed the City of *Jerusalem*, the Temple, and (in a great measure) the Ancient Civil Politie of the *Jewish* Nation.

The Figurative Terms in the latter part of the verse are obvious; and need not much to be said for their Explication. I shall add what is needful in a few words.

Rod.] The same word is rendred *Staff*. The word according to the Notation of it, signifieth a Thing to Lean upon. Hence it is Metaphorically put for whatsoever is necessary for the Subsistence of another. So *the Staff of Bread*, in *Lev.* 26. 26. and *Ezek.* 4. 16. is that supply of such Kind, which a Person or People hath dependance upon, and cannot subsist without: Hence it signifieth Power, Authority, or Government; *Isa.* 9. 4 and 10. 24 *Per. Metaph.* Because Government is the very Prop and Support of a State and that by which it doth subsist. Or, (as some would have it) It may be put for Government or Authority, *Per Metonymiam Adjuncti*, the sign being put for the Thing signified. Because su

Rods were an Ancient Badge of those that were in Authority. Whence the same word signifieth a *Tribe*. *Psal.* 78. 7. Because every *Tribe* had a *Rod*, with the Name of that *Tribe* on it, which the Princes of the *Tribes* used to carry in their Hands as Ensigns of their Authority. So that by *Rods*, we are to understand Persons in Authority; the Adjunct being put for the Subject.

Scepter.] Is a word of the same Import; A *Scepter* is a Mark of Majesty and Severity which Kings of old, as well as now, were wont to use. Yet it is not to be restrained to Kingly Domination only: (in *Amos* 1. 8. It is used concerning the State of the *Philistines* which was *Aristocratical*:) And it signifieth, by the same *Metonymie*, any Power or Majesty, of Government or Rule, under what form or Name soever. This then explaineth the former word; *No Rods for a Scepter*; i. e. Men in Authority, or Civil Government; for the Term *Scepter* is no where applied to any other kind of Government exercised by Men over one another.

To Rule.] The word is of great Extent, implies a Right and Authority over Persons and Actions, and whatever can be Governed: In a word, it comprehends here, whatever belongs to the Exercise of Civil Power: as to Enact Laws, to assure Rewards to the Obedient; to determine Penalties for the Disobedient, and to distribute both Rewards and Punishments. *No Rod for a Scepter to Rule*; i. e. Such were wanting as should hold

hold the Reins of Government, manage Affairs of State, preserve Order and Peace.

But, How so? Was not *Zedekiah* King? And had he not Officers under him? This Difficulty will easily be removed, by considering the Quality of these *Rods*; which the Prophet adds; and is principally to be taken notice of, and observed here. *Rods* they had, but not *Strong Ones*.

No Strong Rod.] or Rod of strength. Commonly applyed to Kings & Kingdoms, which are for the most part, won and held thereby. This the Prophet adds to compleat the Description of those, whose help the state wanted: and that very agreeably with the Metaphor of a Rod or Staff, here used. If a Staff have no strength in it, it will prove but a Deceit, Cheat and Disappointment, to whomsoever make use of it: it is its strength that makes it Serviceable. The same is true also, in this figurative use of the Word; or of those whom the Prophet here stileth *Rods*. Whatsoever is requisite to accomplish Those that bear Rule, that the state may safely have dependance upon them; and without hazard lean upon their Conduct, whether it be Wisdom, Justice, Piety, Prowess; that is the strength of these *Rods*, the Prophet here speaks of. And it is evident, he speaks of them under this Consideration (*viz.* as so accomplished) for men in Authority there were; *Zedekiah* was now King; after him the King of *Babylon* appointed *Gedaliah* Governour; (the time was no
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yet come for *the Scepter to depart from Judah*, Gen. 49. 10.) But these Rods, were not strong ones ; accomplished for their places, and the Service of their Generations.

Thus you have the Prophet's Representation of their calamitous Circumstances. Next follows his Reflection upon them. *This is a Lamentation*] It is a word that signifyeth the deepest Mourning, 2 Sam. 1. 16. But how was this a Lamentation ? It was so, both. (1.) *Formally*. It was of it self ground of great Sorrow ; That a State, once famous and flourishing, and (which is more) so peculiarly favoured of God above all others, should be thus cast down to the Ground. v. 12. (2.) *Effectively*. It would open a Gap to numberless Ruins ; which both they that now lived should smart under ; and they also should rue, who were yet unborn.

It is, and shall be for a Lamentation : noting both the *Certainty* and *Duration* of these Calamities and Sorrows. For evils that come in at the Door of a Weak, Remiss, Lax Government, don't use to be speedily turned out again.

So you have the case of this People opened (so far as concerns their Civil State) and you have it lamented as very sorrowful. Whosoever shall look back to the times of King *David*, with those next following, and, shall take a view of the Conquests of that Reign; of Enemies subdued ; Cities taken ; Countries subjected ; People made tributary ; Religion and Justice flourishing ;
and

and the Nation formidable to all that were round about them ; together with the peacefull Policy and Glory of *Solomon* his Son and Successor ; and shall consider further, what all this was at length come to, in the times of our Prophet, through the grievous Sins, and gross Imprudence, of the highest Ranks and degrees of men accompanied with the wretched Degeneracy of the whole People (a natural consequent of the former) will without Hesitation subscribe to this of the Prophet ; and acknowledge it to be just matter of Lamentation. It were enough to make a sensible mans heart ake, to compare the *Miseries* of this time wherein the Prophet wrote, with the *Glories* of the former.

These things, are they not written for our Learning ? Certainly, It is an obvious Truth that from hence lies before us ; *Viz.* That no greater Misery can well befall a People . (considered in their politick Capacity) than to be destitute of such Rulers as the Prophet here speaks of ; or to be under the Government of others. It is this that the Prophet here Laments, as that which was and would be, a dreadful inlet to undoing Evils. And consequently, the happy state of a People, is hence inferred, who have Strong Rods for Scepters to rule them.

This is the Lesson ; And we shall be happy, if we can learn it from the Harms of others, and not our own. *Felix quem faciunt aliena Pericula cautum.*

This

This therefore give me leave to recommend to you at this Time, in this general Inference from the Words, as the Doctrine to be considered and improved. *Viz.*

D O C T R I N E.

Able and Faithful Rulers, are Rich Blessings to a People, and the want of such is Ruinous. Or this; Civil Rulers, able for, and faithful in their Places, are rich Blessings to their People; and the want of such, is fatal.

When those that are Vested with such Authority, are meetly accomplished for their Places, and faithful in discharging the Trust reposed in them, they are incomparable Blessings; Blessings of such Importance, that when they fail, it brings Ruine upon a People. They are great Blessings themselves, and may be happy Instruments of many more. These are the *Strong Rods*, unto which the Prophet in the Context, *ver. 11.* doth attribute the Grandeur and Glory of the once Flourishing State of *Judah*. And *She* had *Strong Rods*, for the Scepter of them that bear Rule, and her Stature was Exalted among the thick Branches, &c. But now, *O Tempora! O Mores!* Things had quite another Face; The *Rods* had no *Strength* in them; All the Ancient Glory was laid in the Dust, and every thing covered over with Disorder and Confusion.

Here

Here are two things to be considered.

1. The Subjects spoken of : *Rulers*.

2. What it is makes Them such great Blessings

1. *The Subjects are Rulers, i. e.* Such as are in Places of Civil Authority, and have the Government of others. Of these the Prophet here speaketh. And the metaphorical terms used in the Description, do point out Civil Rulers, as the Persons described. For if the Term *Rod* may be applied to some other kind of Government, beside Civil ; yet at least, *Scepters*, (which is the other Term,) are proper Badges of this kind of Authority, and belong **only** to Civil Rulers.

Of these, some are *Supreme* ; who Stand in the Highest Rank of Dominion among Men, and are accountable only to the King of Kings. These, in respect of all Inferiour Ranks, are (as it were) the Fountains of all Rightful Authority, and like the Sun, Shine with their own Light. There are others, who are *Subordinate* ; who though they Shine also in their proper *Sphere*, yet they Shine with a borrowed Light ; and derive that Authority which they have, from the Higher Powers ; and are accountable to those by whom they are Authorized. Of both the Apostle makes mention. 1 Pet. 2 13, 14.

And (as there are these two Degrees of Rulers, so) there is a Twofold Authority residing in them.

1. There is a *Power of Legislation*, making
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Law

Laws, enjoyning a Rule of Obedience, with the promise of a Reward ; and the Addition of a Penalty, in case of Disobedience : All which, some (it seemeth not so rightly) take to be so Essential to Sovereignty, that it cannot be granted to any Subordinate Ruler, without admitting Him to a Participation of Sovereignty ; or rather without destroying that Sovereignty it self.

2. There is an *Executive Power*, (or if I may use the word) a *Power of Legislation* ; whereby the Laws Enacted are put in Force ; Justice according to Law Administred ; Right is secured ; Injustices are suppressed ; Offenders are punished ; the Obedient are Rewarded ; The Good Order and Peace designed is preserved, and the General Weal promoted.

This twofold Power there is in Civil Rulers, and may respectively belong to both Supreme and Subordinate.

Of this latter sort there is a great variety ; There are *Vicerays* of Countries and Kingdoms ; *Governours* of Colonies, and Corporations ; *Judge*, in Causes, Civil and Criminal ; *Magistrates*, *Justices*, and (as the word is abused) *Commissioners* ; some that represent the Commonalty, and are reputed to act for Them : With many more ; according to the various Forms and Methods of Government, that are in use among men. Who have *All* of them (some more, some less of) Authority residing in them ; and each of these Orders, according to their several distinct Proportions

portions of this Authority, may come under Denomination of *Civil Rulers*.

2. What is it that makes them such *R* Blessings?

The Doctrine informs us, That the Strength of these Rods lies in these two things.

1. *Their Ability.* 2. *Their Fidelity.*

The one Respects their *Accomplishment* their Places. The other, their *Honesty* in the Places. And these two, like the two Pillars of the Temple, are the main Props of a Commonwealth.

To begin with the First; That they may have such Blessings.

1. *They must be Able Men.* *Exod. 18. 21.* Else it will be a Vanity, to expect any Security or Benefit from their Conduct; and a point of the greatest madness to be Flattered with Hope of it.

Here Observe these few Particulars.

1. *They should be Men of Knowledge and Wisdom.* *Deut. 1. 13.* Without Knowledge, neither can Wholesome Laws be Enacted; or those that are so, understood, or put in Execution. There is not (perhaps) any Study more copious, or any Practice more difficult, than that of Law: There is such a vast Variety of Actions requiring a particular Application of the General Rules of Justice to them; there are so many knotty, intricate Cases, wherein the Truth is not only so shallow, as to be easily come at;

be of any tolerable Attainments in this sort Skill, calls for Good Parts, and a good Improvement of them. This Wisdom Solomon begg'd of God, 2 Chron. 1. 10. And, when he had it, he found it so rich a Jewel in his Crown, necessary to Government, that he speaks of it, which had not a good measure of it, as not worthy *To Speak in the Gate. Prov. 24. 7. i. e.* have any thing to do as Judges in Matters of Judicature. The Gates of Cities, being of Ancient Time, the Places where they Held their Courts of Justice.

Such is the *Unskilfulness* of some that have an *unequal and just Cause*; Such the *Craft and Subtilty* of many that have a *bad one*; such the *Tricks & Shifts* that men have devised, to pervert the Sense of the best, and to Evade the Force of the strongest Laws; such the *Fair Colours*; that the wicked Tongues, & worse Consciences of unconscionable Advocates study to put upon the most unjust and illegal Actions; that if there be not *Wisdom* to search out the Matter, there will be no Judging in which side Truth and Justice lies. Again; *Prudence* is another Branch of this Requisite; and a principal Ornament of an Able Ruler. Wise men are not Prudent Rulers: They must have moreover a Discretion and Aptness, to apply the Knowledge they have, to the Ends of Government; and to the Nature and Circumstances of those things that come under their handling; that Matters of State may be managed with a suitable Honour & Decorum. This will

command Respect from all that are concern
in them ; and preserve Government from falling
under the Contempt of those, that will regard
no longer, than while it hath an Aw upon the
In a word, many things may be lawful in the
selves, which are not expedient for the Good
the Common Weal ; He is a *Wise* man that
knows them ; and he is a *Prudent* Ruler, that *knows*
how to avoid them. It was *David's* Praise, That
when God had set him over his People, *He Guided them by the Skillfulness of his Hands*. *Psal. 78.*

2. They must be *Just and Upright Men*. And
unless they be such, all their Knowledge will be
serve to render them the more heinous Sinners
and the worse Common-wealth's Men. They
must be *Men of Truth* : *Exod. 18. 21.* Again
2 Sam. 23. 3. Such an one was *Job* ; concerning
whom the Lord testifieth that he was *Upright*
Job 1. 1. And *Job* professeth concerning him-
self, *chap. 29. 14.* *I put on Righteousness, &c.*
Judgment was as a Robe and Diadem. These Vir-
tues were the *Attire and Ornaments* of his Soul.
The work which God and men call them to,
to distribute Justice to others, and without that
be such men themselves, they can never do it.
If they han't a steady, constant Care and Zeal
and Love, to promote Justice and Righteousness
among men, they will but abuse their Place
and be false to their Trust ; and this care and
zeal they can never have, unless they be men of
just and honest Principles themselves. Be

as they are to Rule by, never so good and wholesome, yet Judges of a corrupt Conscience, may either wittingly misconstrue them ; wilfully pervert the true intention of them ; (or wink at them that do it ignorantly) or they may delay Justice Sued for upon them, or positively defeat it. When such as Rule over others, own no objection to the known Rules of Justice and honesty, their own wills shall be their Law ; or men will beside, that hath but Wickedness enough to go to the cost of purchasing it at their hands. Flattery and Bribery come upon such, armed men, and there is no Power nor art to withstand them. Finally that Authority which is not exercised under the Influence of honest Principles, will prove either Arbitrary and tyrannical, or turn to Anarchy and Confusion.

They must be Men of Courage and Resolution.

If they knew never so well what they ought to do, & if they have never so much a mind to do it, yet a faint heart will betray both their Knowledge and their Honesty, to the Will of any man that dares to oppose them. Moses therefore gives it in Charge to his Judges, *Deut.*

7. Ye shall not be Afraid of the Face of Man,

Let their Looks be never so big, or their words never so bold ; you that have the Sword of Justice, should not be daunted at them. Those

Corruptions in men, that make Government necessary, make it as necessary, that Rulers should be *Viri Fortes*, Strong Rods, or they will soon be trampled

trampled down, and become insignificant. The Poor when they transgress may be easily punished and kept under ; a little Courage if there be but any care and Conscience in the Magistrate, will serve to reduce them to order, and make them weary of their disorders : But when men of a higher Rank do offend (and that is as often as any) when they that should be Examples of Obedience to others, scorn to stoop to the Laws themselves, bid defiance to those Ordinances which they owe Subjection to, and when they have so done, think by their Riches, or Power, or Friends, or Interest, or any thing else, to stand by, and justify what they have done : He is a man of Courage that takes such as these to task ; and he is not fit to wear the Sword of Justice, that dares not do it. One such *Conwardly* instance, may be an *irreparable Prejudice* to the whole State ; and tends (in the issue) to render Authority contemptible to the Vilest among them.

4. And Lastly. *They must be Pious Godly Men* This, though it be mentioned in the last place is not the least of these Excellent properties of Able Rulers. Yea, this is it which introduceth a *Divine Blessing* upon the Improvement of the other ; and adds a *Lustre and Beauty* to them all. The *Purest Politicks* are but *insipid Traps* unless they have this seasoning ; It is this that influenceth and actuates, the principles of *Moderation* *Honesty* & *Justice* ; It is this that must stren-

then the Hearts and rouse the Courage of Rulers, against the most daring Transgressors. Therefore it was excellent Counsel of *Jethro* to *Moses*, *Exod. 18. 21.* When he laid it down to him as the principal Character of Able Rulers, that *they should be such as fear God.*

I do not say, That none do or may, legally; or justly rule over others, who are not so qualified, or have not this fear : it is an undeniable Truth, that, *Temporal Dominion is not founded on Grace.* Such men may by an indisputable Right, sway the Scepters of *Earthly Kingdoms*, who do not belong themselves to the *Spiritual Kingdom* of Christ ; I am not speaking of mens *Right* to Govern others; but of their being *qualified* for it. A man may have a just right in a thing, and a legal Possession of it, and yet not be fit to make use of it. So here, whatsoever legal Right men have to rule over others, or whatever Authority of this kind they are vested with ; yet Piety is one thing requisite, to the orderly and right improvement of it ; because it is to be exercised *in the Fear of God. 2 Sam. 23. 3.* And to be directed to Gods Glory as the Ultimate end of it. Whether *Sound Christians*, or *Good Politicians* are fittest to bear Rule in Christian Common-weals, is another Question, and forreign from my present Business ; who am considering, not which is the most Excellent of those Properties that are required, and have been mentioned as necessary, to render men Able Rulers : but whether these
that

that have been mentioned are not needful; and this especially among the rest. And surely, tho' there are a great many Good men, who would make but poor Rulers; yet it can't be rationally thought, that such as han't the Fear of God ruling in their own hearts, are qualified as they ought to be for the weighty Charge of Government. To conclude: Whatever may be necessary, to be patiently submitted to, by a People fearing the Lord, whose Rulers have their Right to Govern them by Succession, or any other way, without their Consent or Choice; yet, certainly, it is much to be desired and endeavoured, by such as have the Liberty and Favour of appointing their own Rulers; That *those who will not have God to rule in their own hearts, should have as little as may be to do, in the ruling of his People.*

Let us nextly in a Word or two, consider the Second Branch of the Description: their *Fidelity*.

2. *They must be faithful in their Places.* This is also requisite, to render Rulers such Blessings to their People. If men hold Offices of never so great Advantage to Serve the Publick, and are never so well accomplished for them; yet, if they are not industrious to improve those accomplishments, and careful to make use of those advantages; they not only do no Good themselves, but (which is a double wrong) they take up the Room from, and so prevent others, who have as good Qualifications, and would make

make a good use of them. But (on the other hand) The Fidelity of Rulers crowns their Ability, and makes it to be both seen and honoured of all.

Let me here instance in a few things, wherein this Fidelity of Rulers should, and will be discovered. It will be seen in :

I. *A sedulous applying themselves to the Work of their Office.* The Apostle saith, *Rom. 12. 8. He that ruleth, let him rule with Diligence.* And it is as needful in Civil, as in any kind of Government. Whatever it is, that God calls us to Serve him in, we are to wait upon that thing. And a Heathen could say ; *Spartam quam nactus es, hanc orna.* Civil Rulers are (by the Ordinance both of God and man) not only set apart from, but set above others, for a Special and Honourable Service ; which cannot therefore with a good Conscience be neglected. King *Jehosaphat* gave this Instruction in special, with the Commission he had granted to those Judges that were to set at Jerusalem, *2 Chron. 19. 9. Thus ye shall do : q. d.* mind the thing that you have now in Commission, and let it be done without fail. And for this reason, God hath provided, that such as thus Serve the Publick, should have not only the Honour of Reverence, but also of Tribute ; *Rom. 13. 6. For this cause pay you Tribute also ; for they are Gods Ministers, attending continually on this very Thing.* That, as the former relates to the Dignity ; so the latter should honourably support

port them, and supply the necessities arising from that attendance. Thus, the same right that Rulers have to these civil Dues, Tribute, or Salary, (call it by which name you please) than which right, nothing can be more indisputable, as being the express command of God, *Rom. 13. 7*; The same reason have they to attend to that Service which acquires it.

2. *A diligent Enquiry into all Causes depending before them.* The Judges saith *Moses, Deut. 19. 18. shall make diligent Inquisition*; and *Job saith, chap. 29. 16. The Cause that I knew not, I searched out*; yea, *It is the Honour of a King to search out a matter. Prov. 25. 2.* And before this is well done, before consideration had, and Examination made, of all Witnesses and Circumstances, Proofs and Pleas (with whatever else may be worthy of it, or serve to give Light in the Case) It is not safe but shameful to determine any thing *Prov. 18. 13. He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.* The Truth many times lies deep, and can't be discovered without this course be taken, and diligently followed. This therefore is none of the least difficult parts of a Rulers Task; it requires a great deal, both of pains and patience, and must be undergone. There is the *Onus*, as well as the *Honus*, the Burthen as well as the Honour of Government; & they that will not bear the one, are not worthy to wear the other. When such men as have the Rule of others, are either slowthful in the Business which

which belongs to them as such, or careless about it, and (*Gallio* like) value not whether Matters go right or wrong, so they can but Serve themselves, and get rid of the trouble of being concerned with them, they are not only injurious to particulars, but the very disgrace of their Places, so long as they hold them.

3. *An upright and impartial Judging in every Cause occurring* : not warp'd in the least, from the streight Rule of Just and Right, either by Flattery or Bribery, Favour or Affection. They must not respect persons in Judgment. *Deut* 1. 17. *Prov.* 24. 23. No not the poorest man in his Cause, if he hath not Right on his side. *Exod.* 23.

3. Justice is to be *Given*, not *Sold*, and that with an equal steady hand ; so that, neither a foolish Compassion on the miserable when they are culpable, nor affection to Friends, nor the Insinuations of the Crafty, nor the Daubings of Flatterers, the Gifts of the Wealthy, the Favour of Great Ones, nor yet the Frowns or Threats of the Mighty, should make it incline in the least to either side. Whatever Difference in respect of Dignity there may be between the Parties concerned in the Justice to be Administred, yet Justice remains one and the same ; and the Law by which it is to be Administred, ought to be duly regarded, and kept unto ; and not bow'd and bent on every turn, as may serve Occasion : This will maintain the Honour of the Laws, & of him who Executes them ; whereas if this be neglected, they will be both despised.

4. *A conscientious regulating themselves, according to those Laws by which they Rule.* For although they owe this Obedience, considered in a more private capacity, yet their yielding of it, not a little conduceth to their faithful management of their publick Office ; since they can't be more false to that Trust, than when they are themselves Actors of that Evil, which they are intrusted to punish in others. They are *Custodes tam Pietatis, quam Justitiae inter Homines.* Keepers, Preservers, Promoters of Piety and Righteousness among men: This is it which they have in Charge from God and men ; this is the great Matter committed to them. And for men to violate that thing (whatsoever it be) which is committed to their Care, is among the highest Notes of Infidelity. Good and Faithful Rulers, will be far from thinking, that their Authority (which is to suppress Evil in others) serveth as a Dispensation to themselves, to be, and do as they please. They will not esteem themselves at such a liberty ; or think that they are as much above the *Law* they are to Rule by, as they are above *those* they are to Rule over. But, they know that (considering the Places they stand in) it doth as much concern them, to approve themselves worthy Patterns of all Holy and Righteousness and Obedience, as to punish the default of these in others. They know that their bad Examples, will be more followed (and by more) then their Authority will be feared. *Prov. 29 12.*
And

And that therefore, they can never be honest in their Places, unless they labour to be Instances of that Reverence themselves, which they expect all others should shew to the Laws under their Administration. And (to add no more) when they that should be a Terror to Evil Doers, set themselves up for an Example to them; and do the very things, that they should bear witness against in others, we may be sure, *The Wicked will walk on every side Psal. 12. 8.* without Fear either of God or man. But when those that are in Authority, do by their own Obedience, practically honour the Laws they administer, this is not only an Encouragement to those that do well, but a Terrour to all that do otherwise; and utterly takes away the Hope of Impunity from the most presumptuous. For this Instance of a Rulers Fidelity is the best Assurance that he hath taken up *Dauids Resolution. Psal. 75. 10. To cut off all the Horns of the Wicked; and that he will not bear the Sword of Justice in vain.*

Thus you see, who are the *Strong Rods*; and what it is makes them so: Wise and Just, Courageous and Pious Rulers: Devoting themselves to the work of their Office, diligently enquiring into, and impartially judging in Causes depending, and of Exemplary Conversation.

It remains that we shew them to be rich Blessings.

And that we may make a right Estimate of the

the worth of such men, and come to know what Blessings they are to the Publick; we may *first* consider, wherein the Publick Weal consists; and *then* what Influence they have upon it: And from their Serviceableness to that great End of Government, we may fairly compute what value we ought to put upon them. Wherein this Weal doth lie, the Apostle tells us, 1 Tim. 2. 2. *viz. in a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness and Honesty.* In which words, he points out to us the two great things, that are the grand Interests of a People; *Religion* and *Property.* When a people have the liberty of professing the True and Orthodox Faith of the Gospel, and of Worshipping and Serving the Lord in the ways of his own Appointment, according to the prescription of his blessed Word; & when a people may enjoy their proper Rights and Priviledges, according to Gods Laws and their own; when they have that liberty secured to them, against the Invasions of Error, Profaneness and Superstition; and these Rights and Priviledges maintained both against the Annoyances of a Foreign Power, and against the Attempts of Domestick Oppression, Fraud and Violence, so that as the Psalmist speaks, *Psal 144. 14. There is no breaking in, nor going out, nor complaining in their Streets.* Then they enjoy this Quietness and Peace, in all Godliness and Honesty; *And that People is happy, that is in such a case.*

Now therefore, if it can be evinced, that Able

ble and Faithful Rulers, are the great means under God, for the attaining these great ends of Government, and for the procuring and establishing this Happiness: the matter will be out of all doubt; and that People must be confessed happy, that have such to rule them. And here.

Whosoever shall well weigh the Condition of a People under other Circumstances; whether we consider them as wholly destitute of Rulers; or their Rulers destitute of such Qualifications; shall never want Conviction in this Particular.

1. For, *As to the first of these Cases, viz. When it is the condition of a People to be destitute of Rulers;* their case is wotul. The Consequents of Anarchy are so manifestly fatal to the whole and to particulars, that the very Authors of it, have blush'd to be it's Advocates. Nature it self allows us not to imagine, that the Civil Felicity of a People can subsist without Government. Whatever Dissatisfaction men have conceived, against the Powers that are, they are rather against *the Person*, than the *Authority*: Yea, they, that being weary of any present Powers, are given to Change, do ever pretend to hope for better; which shews, that the Necessity of Government to the common Good of a People, is such a conclusion of the Light of Nature, as cannot be concealed, no not in the most Disaffected. And (which brings to the other case) the same Light that commends some Government as necessary, condemns a bad one.

2. Nor (Secondly) doth it mend the matter much, if a People have such to rule them, as are not suitably qualified: Who have either no Wisdom to discern Time & Judgment; or if they have Wisdom, that Wisdom is not regulated by Justice; or that Justice not strengthened by Courage; or this Courage not influenced by Piety; but they are though ambitious of the Honour, yet careless of the charge of Government; impatient in Examination; rash in Judging; partial in their Sentence; culpable in their Deportment; Examples of that Impiety which they should suppress in others. And what can be expected from such, but the Ruin of a People? They don't know, or if they do, they will not regard the Interest of the Publick; and be sure, *will never Expose themselves in the Defence of it.* They have more advantage than others to wrong the Publick; and as little conscience as any, to restrain them. *These are they that will justify the wicked for a Reward, and take away the Righteousness of the Righteous from him.* Isa. 5. 23. instead of righting those that are injured, they will add to the wrong. Religion suffers deeply by them, and especially by their Immoralities; & the crafty Oppressor takes heart in his wickedness; presuming either to escape their observance, or to have their Connivance. Whoever seek the Hurt of their People, these will do little (to purpose) to prevent them; but if a fair opportunity present, they will become Parties in the Design; and please themselves

Selves, if they may have but the luck to build their own private Fortunes on the Publick Ruins : Or (at least) if they do not thus of set purpose, they'l do the same out of ignorance, sluggishness or cowardize, that others do out of design ; and that's every whit as mischievous to the Publick. *Solomon* paints these men to the life. *Prov.* 28. 15. *As a Raring Lion, and a Raring Bear ; so is a Wicked Ruler over the poor People.* This is the character of *Folly set in great Dignity.* *Eccles.* 10. 6. And these are some of the many miseries that flow from such a Conduct.

I shall not need to enlarge much in so plain a case. Give me leave to add two or three Considerations further, concerning those Rulers in special that have been characterized in this Discourse ; and I come to the Application.

1. Consider, *Such Rulers will study and promote those things that make for the Weal of their People ;* and in this regard are rich Blessings to them. It was for their sake as well as his own, that *Solomon* in 2 *Chron.* 1. 10. begg'd Wisdom of God ; *Prudentiam Regitricem*, that he might know to go out, and come in before his People. They know that for this end, God hath given them their Promotion, with all the advantages that attend it ; and that unless they do accordingly improve it, they shall never be able to yield an account of the Pice that is in their Hands ; they esteem the *Salus Populi*, the Publick Good, to be one of the Chief Subordinate Ends of Government ;

ment; and that whosoever doth not faithfully endeavour the same, can never attain the *Ultimate*. And though the Lord hath advanced them above their Fellow Creatures, and made them Gods among (& in a sence over) men; yet they will remember that they are *Ministers for their Good*; *Rom. 13; 4*. And accordingly do whatsoever lies in their Power, that it may be advanced under their management; that if God bless them therein, they may live the Desire of their People; their Deaths, whether Civil or Natural, be lamented; or their Memories Blessed.

2. Consider, *As they have the greatest Advantage to keep out, and to keep off Evil from their People; so they will diligently and vigorously improve it.* They may do much (none more) to shut the Door against approaching Evil. And they will do as much as they can; especially the greatest Evil of Sin, which opens the Door to all the rest they will conscientiously oppose, not only by strict Laws, and severe Punishments; but also, by labouring to be such a Pattern of Piety themselves, as shall be a powerful Incentive to the well-minded, and as great a dread to those that are otherwise. And though when such Rulers have done their best, there may be very heinous Transgressions among their People; yet they will endeavour that those Transgressions shall remain personal; and not amount to publick Crimes, by being allowed of, or winked at.

And when at any time the Wall of Gods Protection about a People is broken down, these are the Men to *Stand in the Gap*, to repair the Breach; and they may, by their Zeal for Gods Glory, seasonably shewn, in a suitable Witness-bearing against the crying Sins that kindled the Lord's Anger, turn away his Wrath from such a People. So did Phinebas. Numb. 25. 7, 8.

3. Consider. *The success of the most Excellent Forms of Government, and most suitable Laws, doth under God, mainly depend upon the Ability and Fidelity of those that are in the Government.* Which further shews such as these to be exceeding great Blessings. Though there are diverse Forms of Government lawful, and many Laws just in themselves; yet all are not equally expedient for every People. As it is a great part of Prudence in Rulers, to know and consider what is most fitting for, and what manner of Government and Laws is most accomodable to the State and Condition of those that are under them; so also it contributes not a little to the Happiness of a People when they are under such a Method of Government, and under such Laws, as suit them in regard of their proper Circumstances and Design. But yet, let all this be supposed of a People, it is all nothing, if such Rulers as these I am speaking of be wanting. If they that have the Sword of Justice in their Hands, want either Skill or Courage or Conscience to manage it aright; the Government will soon become ineffectual

fectual, and *the Law be but a dead Letter* ; which hath its Life and Power, from an honest and vigorous Execution of it. And whatever a Peoples Priviledges are, though, they have the best contrived Model of Government in the World, and Laws as suitable as can be made for them ; yet if they that have the Rule of them, are not men of such Principles as those that have been mentioned, they will be miserable notwithstanding. Lamentable Instances of which do abound in the Chronicles of the Monarchies of *Israel* and *Judab* ; which though they had a Body of Judicial Laws, compiled for them by God himself ; yet, never any Common Weal, fuller of Fraud, Oppression, Injuries, Violence, and Wickedness of all sorts, (as the frequent complaints of the Prophets do testify) than these were, when unable, or unfaithful Rulers had the Administration of those Laws among them.

4. Consider. *The Lord by whom Princes rule and Nobles even all the Judges of the Earth*, Prov. 8 16. Doth warrant able and faithful Rulers to us, for Publick and great Blessings ; and condemn others as the Causes of a Peoples ruine. What an honourable Character doth the Spirit of God give us, of *Moses*, *Joshua* and *Samuel* among the Judges ? Of *David*, *Solomon*, *Jehosaphat* (and some others) among the Kings ? And what an everlasting Brand of Infamy, the Scripture hath set upon those Kings of *Judab* and *Israel*, that were not so qualified, as you have heard, is obvious to e-

very one that reads the Chronicles of those times with Observation.

To this therefore I shall add only these two or three Particulars, wherein you may see the Lord commending able and faithful Rulers to us as rich Blessings, and condemning others as ruinous.

1. *It is recommended in Dent. 1. 13. and Exod. 18. 21.* to all that have the liberty and power of Electing Civil Rulers, that in their designation of Persons to Places of Authority, they should have special regard to their being so qualified. And that which then contributed to the happiness of a People, cannot now be thought to cross it.

2. *The Lord gives such Rulers in Mercy to a People.* In 2 Chron 9. 8. It is said concerning Solomon; *Because thy God Loved Israel. to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee King over them, to do Judgment and Justice.* It was a blessed Promise, that God supported his people with, when they were languishing under the miseries of a Government, not regarding the Administration of Justice; *That he would restore them Judges as at the first, and Counsellors as at the Beginning;* Isa. 1. 26. *i. e.* such as Moses and Joshua; David and Solomon. And when such as these are removed from a People, their case is awful, and God threatens it as a sore Judgment. Isa. 3. 1, 2.

3. *God sends other Rulers in wrath to a People.* I gave thee a King in mine anger saith the Lord concerning

cerning Saul ; *Hof. 13. 11.* And again *Isa. 3. 4.* God threatens that People with this Curse, *I will give Children to be their Princes, and Babes shall rule over them.* Dreadful are the consequents of this mentioned in the next verse. *The people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour : The Child shall behave himself proudly against the Ancient, and the base against the honourable.* In a word, Violence and Insolence will bear down all before them.

4. *Wise and Faithful Rulers have the Promise of God's Presence and Blessing :* *Prov. 29. 14.* *The King that faithfully judgeth the Poor, his Throne shall be established for ever.* *2 Chron 19 ult.* *Deal Courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.* And God in blessing them, blesteth the whole People. When their methods are Prudent, their aims Right, their endeavours Vigorous, their hearts Valiant, their hands Strong, and God is pleased to be Crowning them with Success ; the Publick will reap the benefit. It is said, *Judges 2. 7.* *The People served the Lord all the days of Joshua.* Joshua faithfully endeavoured it, and God smiled upon his endeavours ; God was with him, and the People flourished in Piety and Prosperity : but it was not long after Joshua's Head was laid in the Grave, before they knew the difference.

The APPLICATION of the Doctrine may be, *USE 1. By way of INSTRUCTION.*

Learn hence.

1. *That it is a signal token of the Divine Favour to a People, when they have such men to rule over them. Their Promotion cometh not from the East or from the West &c. Psal. 75. 6, 7. 'Tis God that sets them up; and His Love is to be seen in it, and ought to be acknowledged.*

2. *What matter of humbling it is to a People, when such are either denied unto them, or removed from them. When the Elders were ceased from the Gate, Lam. 5. 14. The Prophet saith upon it, v. 16. The Crown is fallen from our Heads: when good men are taken away, it is a sad Omen; but when such good men, thus removed, were good Rulers too, it's much more ominous. Such losses are hardly repaired; therefore they are a Lamentation, and shall be for a Lamentation.*

3. *How much it concerns Rulers to be, and approve themselves such men; Strong Rods; as they would not be charged with the Ruining of their People. And, that being themselves rich Blessings, they themselves might be blessed both of God and men.*

4. *That, Those that are Professed Enemies to such a Government as hath Strong Rods to rule, or to such*

such Rulers as these, are upon no Terms to be born withal. But I may not enlarge on these Particulars ; the chief that I aim at in the Present Improvement of this Truth, shall be in two words farther.

Of Direction, and of Exhortation.

U S E II. Of Direction.

This Doctrine affords Excellent Counsel to all such as have the Power of Choosing, and Liberty (by divine Providence, and the Royal favour) of Electing Persons into any Office of Civil Rule and Government among this People. And it ought to be taken notice of by you, as a necessary Direction in the work that is now before you. It highly concerns you to be very careful of not abusing so great a Trust. It is a piece of Service that requires your utmost Care and Conscience. You are this day to transact a matter of great Importance to the Weal of this People : and the Eyes of God and men is upon you : *Of God*, to observe your *Spirits*, Designs, and Ends in this Days work, to bless you accordingly : and the Eyes of *Men* are upon you ; some to rejoyce in all the happy effects that may follow your prudent choice ; others to take advantage of all the follies that you may this day be guilty of. I may well conclude my self very much a Stranger to the
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particular Methods and Customs usual in the manner of your Elections: But, I suppose (whatever steps have been already taken in other places of this Government) there are many in this Assembly who are still to give in their Suffrage. To whom therefore I would more particularly recommend this Rule, that the Doctrine layes before us) and in them to all others, that may hereafter be concerned in the same, or like affair) as that which you ought to attend to. If you would not this day, do that which will be for a Lamentation to this People, and remain so. *Let your Care then be, to Elect such as may be Able for their Places, and Faithful in them.* Don't think your Voices are so your own, that you may bestow them upon whom you will, meerly because you will. Let not that Liberty you have, be abused to an undoing Licentiousness. Beware of those corrupt and sinister Ends, which are too too apt to blind your Judgments, and bias your Affections, from the Rule thus set before you. I shall but hint at some of them.

There are some (of plausible pretences indeed but ungoverned Spirits) who in Affairs of this nature, consult only their own Humours; and choose for such as they hope will most indulge them. These had rather they should be in Authority, than such as have Wisdom and Spirit to controul them; & if they have any secret Grudge against a man of Worth, before it shall weigh
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heavier with them than all his Accomplishments.

Some are wholly Swayed by the Favour they have received from, and the Friendship and Acquaintance they have with these and those men; they think it but a point of Civility, to Vote for such as have been civil, kind, and obliging to them: But we ought to consider that our *good Friends* may be *poor Patrons* of the Common-Weal; they may be as bad Counsellors for the State, as *Jobs* were Comforters to him; Good men should have other ways to express their Gratitude to their Friends, than by the publick Injury; and (*if it must needs be so*) *we had better disgust them, than do that which is worse.*

Some don't so much consider the man, as the Party he belongs to; if he be but of such a sort or set of men, that is the principal Recommendation they look at; this alone is enough with them, to cover a multitude of Infirmities, and as many Sins; whereas the greatest Worth, if it be on the other side, is wholly slighted.

Some look at nothing so much as Faction, and would with their good wills, have none to sway the Scepter of Government, but such as will be sticklers for, and strenuous promoters of, the *Separate Intreagues*, and private Designs, which under the Countenance of Authority, they hope to drive on successfully, against all that shall oppose them.

But surely these, (and all such as these) are pernicious Ends and Designs, to be abhorred by
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all those that are Well willers to the Common-Weal ; and to be avoided by all that have any Interest in the Electing of Persons to any Places of Civil Power. Don't think therefore, that you have nothing to do in this Election, but to please your selves, or gratifie your Friends, or maintain a Party, and uphold a Faction ; But

Remember, *That God hath intrusted you with an Advantage of being Instrumental to procure Rich Blessings to this People.* The Rulers that are this Day to be set over you, will be so far such, as they shall answer the Character that hath been given : And you are bound in Conscience both to God and his People, (detesting the base Ends mentioned) to pitch upon those, concerning whom, you may reasonably hope that they will prove accordingly.

Give me leave therefore a little more distinctly (and as briefly as I may) to open the Particulars of that General Rule, in a few plain Directions.

1. Direction. *Look at Wisdom as a principal thing, and seek for men of Understanding.* Solomon tells us, *That by such as these a State is prolonged.* Prov. 28. 2. Religion commends it to us as a duty, and the Light of Reason as the most Excellent Policy. *Nebuchadnezzar*, though a Heathen, spake wisely, when he gave those Instructions unto *Ashpenaz*, concerning the Choice he was to make among the Children of the Captivity, for some to be improved in Affairs of State.

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Dan. i. 4, 5. that they should be such, as were *Skilful in all wisdom, cunning in knowledge, and understanding Science* ; who were first to be instructed in the Affairs that were to be committed to them, v. 4 since they were to be taught the learning of the *Chaldeans*, and afterwards, in the end of three years, to stand before the King, v. 5. i. e. to be introduced to Service. Those that are well knowing, and versed in the concerns that belong to any place of Publick Trust, are most likely to do good in it. Others (perhaps) may, but when they do, it is but by accident; *And it is a meer chance if an unskilful Pilot escape a Shipwrack.* It is knowledge that lights the way, and discovers the path of Justice; and 'tis knowledge that begets a confidence in the Administration of it. If men know the way they are in to be right, it makes them go on boldly in it ; but if they are once at a loss, it soon disheartens them. In a word, There's the Power *Legislative and Executive*, and neither can stand without there be wisdom to support it. The making of good and wholesome Laws, the vigorous and successful Executing of them, when they are made ; the maintaining of the Honour and Dignity of Government, which are all of great Importance to a Common-Weal, & principal parts of the care of Rulers ; (and they are things that belong to the Wise ; *Prov. 24.23.*) They are to be expected from none other ; and therefore these only are to be entrusted with the management of them,

2. Direction. *Account that Just men (only) will become the Seats of Justice; and that none but such are worthy to have any thing to do in the Administration of it.* When the Ministers of Justice have wisdom and knowledge to inform them about the Rule, and Conscience to keep up to it, we may then hope, that *Judgment will run down as Waters, and Righteousness as a mighty Stream.* Amos 5. 24. That Advice of Christ's, Mat. 10. 16. is very accommodable to Rulers; *They should be wise as Serpents, but harmless as Doves withal.* David was eminent in his place, as well for the Integrity of his Heart, as for the skilfulness of his hands. 1st Sol. 78. 72 And in *Jethro's* Advice to *Moses*, Exod. 18. 21. He counsels him to Choose Men of Truth, having Correctness, i. e. such as out of their Love of, and Zeal to Justice, would abhor to be tempted either by Flattery, Bribery, or Company, (Honour, Profit or Friendship) to wrong their Consciences, and wrest Judgment. These are they that will respect not the Person, but the Cause, and do that which is right to the small as well as the great: as *Moses* charged the Judges he set over that People. Dent. 1. 17. But men that are of unrighteous dishonest Principles, though they may possibly sometimes do that which is just; yet it is not so, as it is done by them; nor is it reasonably to be expected from them. When the Administration of Justice falls into their Hands, they cannot have any greater care about it than to make

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ain of it. He that will have it shall purchase;
; and if it will not go off so, Injustice shall
; put instead of it; to them the matter is one
id the same, so they can but get by the Bargain.

3. Direction. *Think none fit to wear the Sword
Justice, but such as have Courage and Resolution,
and Zeal to manage it.* Such as dare say with
David: Psal. 75. 10. *All the Horns of the Wicked
will I cut off,* and dare, whenever there is need,
; as good as their word. Such as are concern-
l for the Honour of that Authority they are
ested with; and fear not to undertake whosoever
all adventure to trample upon it. They abhor
ch a tameness of Spirit, as can endure the law-
Insolencies of such as should Honour them in
their Places: And whatever Resemblance it may
pretend to Patience, they know it too well to be
ceived by it, and justly reckon it to be an in-
excusable shameful Timorousness. These are
they that know they *should not*, and will make all
now they *will not bear the Sword of Justice in
vain.* All others are more for shew than any
good Service. Be advised therefore in your
choice to avoid them: Do you see any, that
will be daunted with great words, or fear the fa-
ces of men; that will tremble at the *Browns* of
me that can do them a diskindness, or at the
breats of one that can do them a Favour, or
at dare not (with *Phinebas*) shew themselves in
the Front, to make head against prevailing im-
pious Wickedness: Never expect much of such
men;

men : *A Sword will never do any Feats, so long as it is in a Cowards hand* : And for them that hope for Defence and Protection by it, to put it into such hand as these, is (to say no worse of it) the greatest indiscretion.

4. Direction. *Let the Fear of the Lord be deemed a principal Qualification of those that are to be entrusted with the Government.* Able men are men *fearing God.* *Exod. 18. 21.* Those that are Ruled themselves by the fear of God, will Rule others in his fear; and that is the only Government which hath the promise of a Blessing. You have been often assured (and especially by those Servants of the Lord, that have delivered his message to you upon the like Occasion with this of the present day) that the maintaining of the Truths of Gods Word, in Honour and Purity; the promoting of Piety; the Punishing & Suppressing of all Wickedness; are the grand Interest of a People professing the Name of the Lord; and of your selves in Particular, who have been so signally owned of God in the work of the Gospel. Let me yet once more renew this Message to you in the words of the Prophet. *2 Chron. 15. 2.* *The Lord is with you while you be with him : and if ye seek him he will be found of you, but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you :* Be assured, that if this work dies, we shall dye with it : and that there is great danger of its dying, if those that Rule us under God, have not his Fear planted in their hearts ;
but

but are wholly void of any thing within that may oblige them to be true to him. Irreligious men will be no better Rulers : He that is an Enemy to his own Soul, (and so is every one that doth not fear God) He that hath no more Religion than what will serve to deceive others withal ; and is (as all such are) false to the Profession that he makes of Religion ; will be no better to his Countrey, whenever he thinks he may be so to his Advantage. Such as don't fear God, will easily be vassalized to the Wills of any that are greater than themselves, and can do them an Injury ; these would be very corrupt Judges in that case, which the Apostles dared to refer to the Consciences of their own Judges, *Acts 4. 14. viz. Whether it be better to obey God or men.* And it may be said to such, as *Tertullian* of old objected to some among the Romans ; *Majore formidine Caesarem observatis, quam ipsum de Olympo Jovem.* But such as fear God, will be afraid (for that very reason) of Injuring men. They will as they are *Custodes Tabularum*, not only command them to be kept, and provide that due Testimony may be born against those that do not ; but also they will commend the Observation of them, by a Pattern worthy of those, whose eminency renders their Example more observable and more effectual. In a word, This fear will influence them to all Fidelity, Diligence, and Honesty, Impartiality, Pains, and Equity. They will remember that the Judgment is the Lords ; and if any thing

be wrong done by any of his Vicegerents here below, the meanest of his Subjects over whom they rule, have a fair Plea, and Prohibition lying against it in the Court of Heaven, where it shall be called over again, and Justice done them. Such Rulers as these will be *Nursing Fathers* indeed; and in Conscience towards God, seek the good of their People; advance the common Interest, be zealous Promoters of Piety; and all ungodliness they will reprove in the Gate. These are *the Strong Rods*; whereas from all others, *there will go out a Fire, devouring all the fruit, and destroying all the comforts of a People.*

5. I might add farther. Put Honour upon such as will stand firm for the Common Interest, and make the Weal of the Publick their chief Care & Business. In this case especially, they that are given to Change are not to be meddled with. *Prov. 24. 21.* In all Revolutions (that are not absolutely necessary for the Preservation of Justice and Equity) it is hazardable whether the Publick will not come by the loss; and when it doth, it doth not always recover it again; & that too (for the most part) a long time first: and for this reason, such as are so addicted, are to be eschewed. Yet, beware of thinking, that all that have been aspersed as Enemies to the Common Weal, do deserve that Character (which it may be is but the effect of some Secret Grudge of malignant men against them.) We shall be very unwise, to deprive our selves of the benefit of those, that can do God and
their

their Country Service, for the Calumnies & Reproaches, that they are laden withal by their Ignorant and Unthankful Neighbours.

6. Again. *Respect such as will adorn their Authority with an Example worthy of the Dignity that they sustain.* Remember that great Examples, if they be good, will confirm the weak ; and if they be bad, will enervate and weaken the Strongest Laws. When it may be said to them that Rule, as once Christ said, in that case mentioned, *Job. 8. 7. He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first Stone.* There will either be no Punishment of Wickedness, or no Good will come of it. They are very unfit to punish others, who are themselves Transgressors. But I omit what Particulars might be added, as being comprised in the General Directions given : and proceed to the last,

U S E. III. *Of Exhortation.*

In two Branches.

1. *To such as are, or may this day be Elected and Established the Civil Rulers of this People.* You see (Honoured and much Esteemed) wherein you may be Rich Blessings. As it is ~~our~~ duty incessantly to pray God that you may be so, for altho we submissively pray you that you would be so. Be you therefore intreated (whosoever you are, upon whom the over ruling Hand of the Lord shall order the Lot to fall this day) to approve yourselves *Strong Rods.* Esteem this to be your greatest Glory ; the contrary to this will be both your & our Ruin. Let the Qualifications which have at this

time been described to you, be exemplified in all your managements; that our own Experience may teach us the happiness of a People, who are in such a case, who have Strong Rods for a Scepter to rule them. Your Ability is under God our strength; your Fidelity, our Security: *If these Foundations are destroyed what shall the Righteous do? Psal. 11. 3.* If these Foundations are out of course, nothing will go right, or stand long among us. It is a great Trust which is this day to be committed to you; your Advantages hereupon to do much for the Glory of God among his People, by going before them, and leading them in the way of the Lord, are very Eminent: And God hath answerable Expectations concerning you; you may be for a Name and a Praise unto him; (and we may be so too, by God's blessing on your Conduct.) This God expects; and this is the Hope and Prayer of such as fear the Lord among us. You have our hearty Wishes that God would be with you, as he hath been with those that are gone before you: That you may be as the Mountains that bring Peace, and as the Hills that produce Righteousness to his People: That your Wisdom, Justice, Courage, Piety, may be the safeguard of our Land, and the Stability of our Times: These are the things, which duly improved, will make you *Rich Blessings*. Be intreated therefore to shine in the Improvement of them. The Lord hath said, *Ye are Gods, Psal. 82. 6.* Let these Virtues appear, as inseparable Properties of your Deity: If
you

you lack these things, you cannot stand, and we must fall. I might remember you of many particulars by way of Motive. As,

I. *You have the Care and Charge of a People whom God hath by special Favour, taken to be his own Peculiar.* And such a Trust as this ought to be strenuously & faithfully discharged. The Lord our God hath by signal Protections, and a stretched out Arm, made these (once dark) corners of the earth a place of comfortable Entertainment to a Remnant of his faithful Servants, and their Seed : Here he hath intrusted us with the choise Mercies of his Word & Ordinances ; we have had them & enjoyed them, in safety from all the Endeavours of such, as with an envious eye and vexed Soul, have beheld what God hath been doing for us ; and though we have sadly proved our selves ungrateful, backsliding Children, untrue to the Interest of the Gospel, and Kingdom of Christ among us : yet Oh ! how are Covenant Mercies prolonged to us ? and how great are the Covenant Engagements and Obligations, that we are continued under to this Day ? And what is the Lords end in all this, but that we should be holiness unto him ? What doth God design, but that we should shew forth his Praises, who hath thus crowned us ? What doth the Lord look for from us, but such fruit as this ? And, the Honour God puts upon you, whom he makes the Rulers of his People, the Authority which he doth vest you with, is with Subserviency to this end. God hath designed the

Civil Government of his People, to concenter with Ecclesiastical Administrations : and (though by different *Mediums*) they are both levelled at the same end ; the maintaining of Piety, and promoting of a Covenant walk with him. That which is the Lords Aim in this, should be yours also ; all your Conducts should center here. This is the work that belongs to you in your Publick Capacities ; and it calls for your Wisdom and Justice, and Zeal and Holiness ; if you would be found thus ruling with God, and faithful with his Saints. *Hosea* 11. 12.

2. Again. *Do not those palpable Declensions from the way of the Lord, and Covenant Violations which we are manifestly guilty of, loudly proclaim it necessary for you to bestir your selves with a holy Prudence, and Zeal for the Cause of God among us ?* Oh ! how justly may the Lord complain of us, that we are become the degenerate Plant of a strange Vine unto him ? Where is that Zeal for God and his ways ? that high esteem of Gospel Priviledges ; that faithful improvement of Sacred Ordinances ; that Care & Concernment for the Advancing of the Kingdom of Christ ? which things were once our praise. Are not these great Interests miserably disregarded ? And Oh ! what Irreligion, Lukewarmness, Prophaness, and Immoralities, have usurped their Room ? And doth not the Lord expect that the Leaders of his People should be their Reformers ? You have great Examples, the Royal Presidents of *Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah*, famous
in

in this matter, accepted and blessed of the Lord. Let this then be your great Care, to recover us a sinful sinning People, from all our Apostasies. And Oh ! how much may you do, by your Wisdom & Piety, Zeal and Justice, Precept and Example, Authority and Awe, to awaken us, and recover us again to the good wayes of God ? The Good Lord strengthen you yet more and more in all your endeavours for this ; and think upon you, according to all that you have done, and shall still be doing for his People.

3. Further. *Hath not the Lord himself been coming near to Judgment ! and pleading with and against his People ?* It is obvious that God hath a Controversy with us, and He is wrath with his Inheritance. The tender mercy of God indeed doth spare us to this day, many good and pleasant things ; yet in divers respects, God hath been and is humbling us, and bringing us low. Tho' we may with thankful Admiration at the Divine Goodness ; say as the Psalmist, *Psal. 78. 38.* (concerning the Lords Dispensations towards us) *Many a time turned He his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath ;* yet if we consider the Bloodshed, and ruinous Devastations in some Places of this Land, together with the languishing State of the whole Country at this Day, we may also take up the Psalmists complaint, *Psal. 80. 5.* And say, *Thou feedest us with the Bread of Tears, and givest us Tears to drink without measure.* I shall not need to mention those various Rebukes of Providence

dence, (as Blaftings and Mildews, Droughts, Unseasonable Frosts or late, Sicknefs, & the Sword) which you have fo often, in your Orders for Publick Humiliation, piously directed us to take notice of, as Tokens of the Lords Anger ; furely by thefe Providences God hath been loudly testifying againft our Transgreffions : And we may read in them, that of the Prophet. *Jer. 5. 25. Your Sins have withholden good things from you.* We have a cafe fit and proper for us under our prefent Circumftances to propound and confider, ftated and refolved to our hand, in Deut. 29. 23, 24. *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this Land, what meaneth the Heat of this great Anger ?* Then men fhall fay, becaufe they have forfaken the Covenant of the Lord God of their Fathers. And if this be a Day wherein the Lord is coming out againft us in Judgment ; Oa ! How fhould you that are the Lords Subftitutes bear witnefs in your places againft the Transgreffions which provoke him ? If you are thus a Terror to Evil Doers, it may be God will do no more terrible things in Judgment againft us : If you do wifely and courageoufly Execute Judgment, who knows but it may divert the Lords. *Phinebas* did fo, and the *Plague was ftayed*, *Pfal 106 30.*

4 You do ordinarily (I fuppofe I may fay conftantly) bring your felves under the Sacred Bond of a Solemn Oath, with impartiality & fidelity to difcharge the Trust committed to you, and fo Rule this People according to the Laws of God, and the King ; than which

which nothing can be a stricter tie to those that know and believe, that the same God, whom they have thus called upon to be a witness of the sincerity and integrity of their hearts, in what they are undertaking; will, if they be either careless or false, not suffer them to escape his Righteous Judgment, *and most severe Reflections.*

5 Shall I add this one consideration further, (both to stir you up to, and strengthen you in your publick work :) It is this; *You have the Royal Favour of a most Gracious Sovereign*, whom the Divine Providence hath in a wonderful manner raised up, and hitherto preserved, to be the Bulwark of Religion and Property, to the English Israel: We are a little Branch of that Vine; our Civil Life and Liberty is bound up in theirs; we have felt the warmth of those benign Influences, which have refreshed the wearied Land of our Fore fathers Sepulchres; and as the Prophet *Ezekiel* speaks, chap. 34. 27. *God hath broken the Bands of the Yoke that were upon us, and delivered us out of the Hands of those that would have served themselves of us.* God who hath the Hearts of Princes in his Hand, hath (whatever our Enemies have endeavoured to the contrary) given you Favour in the sight of the King: You have in this respect great opportunity and advantage to be consulting and promoting the things which will be for the Glory of God, the Interest of his Kingdom, and the Weal of his People: According as it is improved, we may hope God will prolong it; He will not
take

take it well at our hands if it be neglected. Give me leave then to say, to you that are, or may this Day be Rulers over us, as once it was said to *Ezra, chap. 10. 4 This matter belongeth unto you*: It is your part principally to take care for the Improvement of such an Opportunity, and ours to be with you in it. When the Lord by whom Princes rule, maketh them Nursing Fathers to his People, it openeth a wide door of Liberty and Power, to all that derive Authority from them to be in their respective places, *Rods of Strength*, for defending and encouraging the Good, for suppressing and punishing the Wicked, for promoting Piety and Righteousness; and if there be an heart wanting to improve such an advantage, we may probably repent it, when we can do nothing else.

Suffer then the Exhortation, I beseech you in the words of the Lord, which you have in *Hag. 2. 4. Be strong O Zerubbabel and work*: Do the work of your publick Capacities, with Prudence, Honour and Fidelity: *I am with you saith the Lord of Hosts*. Thus if you approve your selves, it will be Honour to God, your Comfort, our Weal, and the rejoicing of all that love God & his People.

There are a few things, which I would crave your Patience (Honoured and much Respected) that I may briefly recommend unto you; as needful to be much in your Eyes, and upon your Hearts, if you would thus acquit your selves; & be Strong Rods to us at such a Day as this.

1. *Let the Interest of Religion and Holiness, be your principal care*: Labour the reviving and promoting of it with all your strength. This is both our *Decus & Tutamen*; we may truly say of this great Article, that it is, *Articulus stantis et cadentis Novæ Angliæ*. It is this that engageth the Lord to deal graciously with his people, and to be their Saviour in *Isa. 63. 7*. When the Church had reckoned up the Loving-kindnesses of God, many ways expressed; we have in the following verse the consideration intimated, upon which the Lord proceeded in doing those great things for his people, verse 8. *For he said, surely they are my People, Children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour*; *q. d.* They will not be false to my Covenant, they will walk in my ways, and keep my Commandments, they will remember their Engagements and fulfil them; and upon their so doing, he had and would shew them his Salvation. In this way they might hope for it; but if they should prove lying, unholy, backsliding Children, they would but deceive themselves to expect it. Upon this ground hath the Lord been proceeding with our Fathers in time past; and upon the same will he deal with us at this Day. If we consider the things that were at the beginning, when God first laid the Foundations of Gospel work in these Ends of the Earth; if we remember the Wonders of old, which we have heard, and our Fathers have told us; we may say of those Providences, whereby God through
many

many Difficulties, brought a Remnant of his faithful People into these remote corners of the World, planted and preserved them here, as *David* doth, *Psal.* 44. 7. That the Lord did it; *By his Right-hand, &c. because he had a favour for them.* By great Deliverances and Salvations did the Lord manifest his Presence among them, and Loving-kindness to them; and they were all upon this account *Psal.* 22. 4. *Our Fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.* They had Holiness to the Lord Engraven upon their hearts, designs, and ways, and God was with them. If we are true to this Interest and Cause of God, and walk in the Covenant of the Lord God of our Fathers, it shall be well with us. *Exod.* 20. 6. But if there be a declining, backsliding, apostatizing Spirit in us; if we give the Lord cause to take up that Complaint concerning us, in *Mal.* 3. 7. *Even from the dayes of your Fathers, ye are gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them.* Oh! what Presumption, what Madnels will it be for us to hope, that as he was theirs, so he will be our Saviour. Alas! How many are there that have forgotten & forsaken this great Interest of the Lord among us? Be you intreated therefore (who shall have the rule of this People) to consider it, and engage your hearts to the advancing of it. Remember that there is a Solemn Covenant between God & this his People; God hath taken them to be his, & they have owned themselves to be the Lords; upon this Foundation stand all our
Mer-

Mercies, Priviledges, Enjoyments; & whatsoever can contribute any thing to our present or future Felicity : and therefore the recovering of us from all our Apostasies, and the maintaining & promoting of serious Godliness among us, should & will be the chief Scope of such Rulers, as make Conscience to Serve either God; or his People.

2. *Express a high Veneration for, and Regard unto Gods holy Ordinances.* Let them have all that Security from the Blasphemous Reproaches, and Abuses of Ungodly men, that either your Laws, or your Examples can afford them. If they that go before a People go out of this way, sad Experience proves it but too natural a practice for them to follow their Leaders. So *Jeroboam the son of Nebat made Israel to Sin.* 1 King. 16. 26. He led the Dance and he had the far greatest part of a Nation to follow him. If you dont make *much* of these things, others will make *light* of them : If you violate in never so small a Degree the Honour of Sacred things, others will be kept within no Bounds : it will be encouragement enough to them, if they have any hope to be tolerated in their prophaneſs ; but it will be much more, if they have such as should punish it for a *President*.

3. *Labour to settle prudent Methods for the transmitting of the publick Gospel Worship unto the Rising Generation, upon as firm and lasting Foundations as may be.* There is nothing in the World, that we ought to be more concerned to leave to Posterity. If any thing in order to this, may be done by the
Le-

Legislative Power among us (which I submit to your most serious consideration) we may be sure it will be a good Improvement of it. We shall never lose by what we lay out for that Interest of Christ's Kingdom ; but the Starving of this Interest, hath brought a Curse upon a People.

Mal. 3. 9, 10. 11. 12. And because many of the Passages in this Text do so directly point at many of the Lords hambling Dispensations towards us, I cannot but mention it at large, *Ye are Cursed with a Curse, for you have robbed me, even this whole Nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, & prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven & pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes : & he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all Nations shall call you blessed : for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts.* Whatever Policy was in it, it was one of *Jeroboams* Sins. *1 King. 12. 22, 34.* That he took of the lowest of the People, and made them Priests : And certainly it will be found a sin too, when a course is taken to make those that are separated to the Service of God, the meanest among a People. To prevent which, tho' some things may have been worthily done, yet it is well worthy our Consideration, whether the Experience we have had of the unsuccessfulness of those measures that have been already

already taken, doth not call for something farther to be done: And the sad pass things of this nature are already come to in some places, doth awaken to as quick a dispatch as may be. How long the price (the Liberty & Authority for this) which you now have, will be in your hands, the Lord only knoweth: And besides, when things are once going down hill, the further they go, the harder it is to stop them. We may rationally look that if what is amiss in a matter of so great Concernment as this, both to our selves and ours, be not rectified speedily, it will grow worse and worse, and be beyond all Remedy at last.

4. *Be a swift witness against the Crying Sins and fearful Abominations that Defile the Land.* When the Providence of God hath brought such wickedness to Light, let it not be smothered, but brought out to condign Punishment You are God's Vicegerents, and should in this Imitate him, who saith, *Mal. 3. 5. I will be a swift witness against the Sorcerers, and against the Adulterers, and against false Swearers, &c.* The Lord hath set you up to be a Terrour to Evil Doers; consider then upon what account God hath a Controversy with the Inhabitants of the Land. Let not your Eye pity, nor your Hand spare those that dare declare their Sin as *Sodom*, when the Land is mourning because of the Iniquities that abound in it. There is (to mention a few things) *Idleness, Pride, Falshood, Contention, Backbiting and Slander, Profanation of Gods Sacred Name, and Holy Day, Uncleanness, Un-*
righteousness,

righteousness, either by Fraud or Force, in our common dealings one with another : Drunkenness, and the propagating of that Sin (for filthy Lucre sake) among the Heathen, who are therefore justly the Rod of Gods Anger against us at this Day ; Are not these some of our crying Sins ? They are Sins which God hath often warned us of, long humbled us for ; yea, and for these, is not the Hand of the Lord stretched out against us still ? For the Lords sake therefore, for your own sakes, and for ours, Do you that have the Sword of Justice in your Hands, strike at, and spare not these Transgressions : Let the wholesome Laws already provided against them be fearlessly Executed ; & if need be, let stricter be made ; let every thing be done that can be done, to root out this Wick- edness.

5. *In matters of Judgment, or respecting the Ad- ministration of Justice ; be not easy in crediting Re- ports, especially when they are made out of Place, Order, and Season. The simple saith Solomon, be- lieveth every word, but the Prudent man looketh well to his going. Prov. 14. 15. The Judgment may ea- sily be forestalled. Prov. 18. 17. He that is first in his own Cause seemeth just. It is no hard matter to contrive a fair Tale, and to make that seem just, which is very unrighteous ; but it behooves there- fore such as sit in Judgment, ere they credit it, to search it out. It is the Honour of a King to search out a matter. Prov. 25. 2. And Prudence to sift out and discover the Truth, (if there be but a*
Conscience

Conscience to judge accordingly) will be found the Ornament and Glory of those that are upon the Seat of Justice.

6. *Be impartially just to all that have occasion to seek for Justice at your Hands.* When you have heard the Cause, judge according to the merit of it. Remember what the Psalmist saith, *Psal. 75.*

2. *When I shall receive the Congregation, I will judge uprightly.* None have (ordinarily) more or greater Temptations to Injustice, than those that have the dispensing of Justice in their hands; avoid them carefully. These snares are some of them more obvious, and can take none but such as are willing to be caught; some are more out of view, and therefore most to be feared and watch'd against, by those that have a Principle of Justice in them. There's a sort of Bribery more gross by gifts; & there's another sort more private & subtil, when men by secret arts and flatteries do wheedle and insinuate themselves into the Affections; which, whensoever it takes, is as great a dishonour to the Dignity of Magistracy, and tends as much to the corruption of Judgment, and perverting of Justice and Right, as any. By this means, a man may for less than *a piece of Bread*, buy Injustice enough to starve and ruin his honest Neighbour. Again, there are some, who would perhaps baulk at the grosser Temptations of Flattery or Bribery, who may be unawares snared by others; and do very unjustly, when they are far from suspecting it. They may be

readily drawn away, to decline after many to wrest Judgment, which we are warned against. *Exod.* 23. 2. They may be too easily moved in their Affections, and ready to shew Indulgence to Offenders, when it consists neither with Piety, nor Justice. But, Remember always; that with you there ought to be no such respect of Persons. *Prov.* 24. 23. Be deaf to the cries of the Poorest, when they can't be heard without wrong to Justice: and regard not the Clamours of the Mighty to the prejudice of Truth.

7. *In animadverting upon Offences committed against good and wholesome Laws, hold a steady course of Punishment:* To neglect which, makes the Timorous grow venturèsome and presumptuous, & the presumptuous grow more fearless. I shall not dispute how far it may be lawful for Rulers to pardon Offenders; it is but seldom that Subjects have reason to complain upon this score; the Severity of Rulers, not their Lenity is mostly blamed: Yet it cannot be denied, but that when the Powers that are, do degenerate into a coldness and remissness in punishing Delinquents; into an easiness of bearing with insolent & proud Offenders; it giveth as deep, not to say, a deeper wound to the Weal of the State, than an excess on the other hand would. It is a mighty discouragement to the well willing and obedient, when they see those that trample upon the Laws, escaping the penalty of them; it also hardens the Disobedient and Rebellious; the hope of escaping will make men venture; and at length

[67]
length they will grow to such an height of Insolence, as will not be contented with any thing less than trampling upon the Authority that hath ever attempted, or shall attempt to curb them. It was well said by *Seneca* of a Prince, *Pœnam, si tuto terit, donet. i.e.* If he can do it not only with his own private, but with the publick safety also. It ought to be considered in the pardoning of Offenders that one main end of the Law is, *Salus Populi*, or Publick Good ; which lieth chiefly in preserving the Authority of the Laws, preventing Injuries and securing mens Rights, as also in vindication of his or their Dignity and Honour, who take care of the Common-Weal ; and where that end may in these ways be promoted withal, it may not be unmeet that Lenity should be exercised. But to pardon Offences, purely out of hope to win Offenders, (which is the fairest pretence of imprudent men) without considering whether the Publick will not sustain more damage other ways than it can be profited by the amendment of the Offenders, if they should chance to be won, is very absurd and foolish.

8. Do your utmost to remove every thing that has the appearance of Deceit and Falshood in it, as far as it is possible, from all Affairs pertaining to the Administration of Justice. It is a sad thing, when it comes a Ruled Case with those that have to do in such Pleadings as are proper for Courts of Justice, that it is but a venial matter, to aver that a thing, be it never so wrong, if they can but

serve the Cause which they have undertaken. And when such as are paid for their speaking, are basely mercenary, as to speak more according to their Fee, than their Consciences; it is a horrid practice, not to be tolerated by such whose business it is to search the matter, and discover the truth. These ought to be frown'd upon, and others countenanced. *Prov. 16. 13. Righteous Lips are the delight of Kings, and they love him that speaks right.* They that croud in their Opinions, under colour of being *Amici Curiae*, are no ways to be allowed of, if they notoriously appear to be *Hostes Inimici*. If silence be but a moderate Penitence to be Enjoyed those that have not wit enough to speak to the Case: Certainly, it is as idle and fitting for those that have not honesty enough to speak the truth in it. And if wise men have patience enough to bear with the folly of the former; yet good Rulers should have more patience than to bear with the wickedness of the latter.

10. *Consult the Honour of Government and maintain*

There are few things that do more conduce to the good of a Common Weal. It was a calamitous Day in *Israel* mentioned, *Isa. 3. 5.* when a Base rose up against the Honourable. And 'twas a time when they had no *Strong Rods* to chastise them; when such abuses as these are not severely reflected upon, the very Authors of them are fault with it. For when they intrench upon the Honour of Authority, they know it is a Misdemeanour;

demeanour, which may not be tolerated ; they know themselves blame worthy enough, but they secretly think also, that you who should punish such intolerable Injuries to the Publick are more to blame in suffering them to escape unpunished. And it may be they are not herein much mistaken. Well, Let them never have occasion for such a Calumny ; keep a strict hand over them, easy methods were never calculated for such ungrateful turbulent Spirits ; *Perit quod facis Ingratus*. All Gentleness is utterly lost upon them.

10. *When any Publick Trust is committed to others that are in Inferiour Places of Power, see to them that they do their Duty faithfully.* Their Neglects and Male doings are among men commonly charged to your Account, who sit Aloft, and have the advantage of inspecting and seeing that things are carried in a right Channel : And indeed, they will be reputed yours in the sight of God too ; through carelessness you don't look after them, or through Favour wink at them.

11. *Arm your selves with Courage.* Think of *David's* words to *Solomon*. 1 King. 2. 2. *Be thou strong, and shew thy self a man :* And of *Jehosaphat's* Charge to his Judges. 2 Chron. 19. 11. *Deal Courageously.* To rule over men in the Fear of God is a work that will meet with no slender opposition. You must expect to have to do with Sons of *Belial* ; and the man that toucheth them must be fenced with Iron, and the Staff of a Spear (we appointed & fearless.) Whatever Difficulties they

re attending this work, yet it is the Lords ; and
 such as he calls to Execute it, must neither shrink
 back for them, or turn aside in the least. Every
 Common Wealth will have some Filth and Of-
 scouring in it, tho' never so much pains be taken
 to keep it neat ; and it is no easy thing to cleanse
 . There are Beasts of Prey, that live by catch-
 ing and devouring, to be found in the best and
 most orderly Polities in the World. And these
 they can't be chased away, yet their Jaws must
 be broken ; and the Prey plucked out of their
 Teeth. This belongs to you ; so did *Job*, chapt.
 9. 17. And it argued that he had an Heart un-
 daunted. Resolve thus to do in the Fear of God,
 and he will strengthen you.

12. Consider the Circumstances of the present Day,
 as to be in Prudence providing against any threatened
 evil. Among other of the sore judgments of
 God, whereby it is a Day of treading down in
 the Valley of Vision, that of the Sword is one.
 And tho' considering it as the Rod of Divine An-
 ger, it behooveth us to be deeply humbled under
 ; yet considering it as in the Hand of an unjust
 enemy, in whose Heart it is only to destroy as is
 said of the *Assyrian* Enemy, *Isa.* 10. 7. And so it
 is a Duty both natural and religious to arm a-
 gainst it. It is good Policy even in a Time of
 peace, to follow *Dauids* steps, who commanded
 that the Children of *Judah* should be taught the
 use of the Bow. 2 *Sam.* 1. 18. And certainly to
 be deficient in this point, when the noise of War
 is

is in our streets, will be very unpardonable. To be unprovided and secure too, at such a time, is a notable Judgment. God forbid we should trust to our Bow, to our Skill, or to any arm of Flesh whatsoever, (we have as little pretences for it as any People under the Sun) yet it behooves us to be up and providing for our selves; and wherein we may to be up and doing for the succour of others. We have many more instances than that of *Laiſh*, to warn us of the Fate of those that dwell carelessly and at quiet, in a time of danger. Yet it is well worthy our noting, what is said in that case, as giving us one great reason of that Security. *Judg. 18. 7. There was no Magistrate in the Land*, that might put them to shame in any thing. You know also, who were cursed for their Sluggishness and Backwardness to jeopard themselves in the High Places of the Field, *to help the People of the Lord against the Mighty. Judg. 5. 23.* You know the Distresses of the Eastern Parts of the Country; You frequently hear of the barbarous Cruelties of those Heathenish Miscreants that shed the blood of the Lords People; I need not mind you of the Danger of our Sea Coasts; the God of all Wisdom direct you, that are our Leaders, and the Captains of his Inheritance, that you may discern the Times; and know what may be requisite for our own safety; and how far it may be Duty for us, to expose and put our selves forward in the Defence of the Common Interest of God's People in this Wilderness, That this Ruin

may not be advanced by any Neglect of ours, or be under your Hand.

13. *Study Unity in your Councils, Proceedings, and in all your Managements.* You know the familar similitude, whereby the Strength and Power of Concord is usually Illustrated. A Bundle of Rods ; they can't be broken, while they are taken together, but are easily snap'd asunder when they are severed. *Vis unita fortior*, is an old Maxim and true. *Divide & Impera* was hellish Policy from the Beginning ; and it is that which the World is throughly versed in now a days. Let your Agreement defeat the hopes of all that may thus attempt to practise upon you. A Harmony in your Councils and Determinations, is the best way to be answered with another in our Obedience.

14 *Be often recommending your selves in all the Affairs (especially) proper to your Places, unto the Lord by earnest Prayer for his Assistance and Blessing.* He is a God of Wisdom, Justice, Power and Holiness ; would you be *Strong Rods*, for the *Defence and Rule* of his People, by *Faith* lay hold on his Strength, and he will make you so. You have been used thus to wait upon the Lord, go on still. Beg the Lords Direction, Influence, Blessing Do it heartily, and he who hath made you ours, will be your Guide ; He will be with you, and make you the *Repairers of our Breaches, the Restorers of our Paths.* *Isa 58. 12.* exceeding great Blessings to his Distressed People.

2. The second Branch of the Exhortation concerns *all, who are the Body of this People.* If

If it be such a Priviledge to have Strong Rods for Scepters to rule us ; and if the want of such cannot but be of fatal Consequence; then How much doth it concern us to endeavour wherein we may the Procurement and Preservation of such a Publick Blessing ? We consult our own Good, and (which ought to be as dear to us) the good of our Posterity, when we do so. Be you then exhorted, for your own sakes, and for their sakes, to mind this thing. That Civil Liberty of Election, which you are this day assembled to exercise, doth advantage many of you to be in this Respect, eminently Serviceable to the Publick Weal ; let it then be wisely improved. Remember the Directions that have been given you, and act in the fear of God ; that by the Blessing of the most High upon your prudent endeavours, we may have no such cause as the Prophet in our Text, of Lamentation. And as you especially have a great Advantage to procure it ; so we have all of us a great Interest in such a general Blessing, and are joyntly concerned to do all we can to advance this Common Felicity. There are many things which for this end God expects of us all, our neglect of which (whatever prudent methods, the most Sufficient and Able men may take to prevent it) will certainly involve us in a most inevitable Ruine. There may be Maladies in the Body which if they be not speedily healed, will ruin the head and all. Whatever the advantages are which Rulers have to promote the Peoples good, & whatever Pains they take to improve them, yet Rulers themselves, are but Second Causes, and will fail in their endeavours, and of their Aims, as God shall withhold his Blessing : and that God oftentimes doth, as a just Punishment of the Peoples Sins. When any Detriment befalls the State, it is common for the Ministers of it to bear the Blame ; when as they many times least deserve it.

it. For, if there be an Ungrateful, Murmuring, Proud Spirit, a Mutinous, Envious and Rebellious Spirit, an Irreligious Spirit Prevailing among a People; it is not all the Counsels of the Wisest, nor Understanding of the Prudent, nor Conduct of the most Sufficient men, that can keep off Ruin from them. Such a People may be miserable, do their Rulers what they can. It was not King *Jehoiachin's* Piety or Prudence (however at the present it laid some kind of restraint upon them) that could divert the approaching lamentable Fate of that Stubborn Sinful People he had the rule of. If there be never so skilful a Hand at Helm, the Ship that will not feel her Helm, may stove upon the Rocks, or Strand upon the Shore at last. There is much of the Success of Government depending upon the suitable becoming behaviour of the People under it. And this is it which we are all Exhorted to at this time. *Strong Rods are Rich Blessings*: God hath a Favour for that People on whom he bestows them. But then we must remember the Tenure by which a People so Priviledged do hold them; It is the same with that on which they have received their Authority from God. *Viz. Quamdiu bene se gesserint.* When a People fail of their Duty, and carry it unworthily under the Command & Conduct of such Rulers; God hath wayes enough to discharge them; to take them from such a People; or (if he doth not so, yet) to cause that they shall not profit them.

For the Prevention of which, I have but these few words to offer, and so shall close.

Are Able and Faithful Rulers such Rich Blessings, and would we contribute to this our Happiness. then,

1. *Let us be thankful to God for such Mercies.* When the Lord gives Kings to be Nursing Fathers to his People, as he promiseth, *Isa 49 23*. Should not the Praises of the Lord resound throughout all the Gates of the

ughter of Zion ? Do we also see such advanced to subordinate Places of Power ? Let us remember, that their Promotion is from God ; It is He that sets them up. *11. 75 6, 7. They are of Him : Rom. 13. 1. And by Him by Rule : Prov. 8. 16* We cast the Lot, but the Lord that is on High, hath the whole disposing of it. *Prov. 16 33.* that our Choice is also of Gods Appointment ; If they be of our desiring, they are of His giving And as when others bear rule over a People, it is a Signal of Gods Displeasure, under which they ought to Mourn ; when our Rods are Strong, it is a Fruit of the Lord's favour, and He ought to have the Praise. In *Psal. 72.* after the Psalmist had in a Prophetical Contemplation celebrated the happy State of the Common-Weal of Israel, in a Day when they enjoyed the Blessing, which the Doctrine speaks of (for the Glory of which Felicity is considered as a Type of Christ's Kingdom) closeth it with Repeated Acclamations of Praise and Honour to God, as the Authour of it, at *v 18. 19. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious Name for ever, and let the whole Earth be filled with his Glory : Amen & Amen.*

2. *Let us highly Prize and Honour them.* That Precept of the Apostle with Reference to Rulers Ecclesiastical, is of as great Force in this case. *1 Thes 5. 13* Where he chargeth us to esteem them that are over us, very highly ; and undervalued Mercies are not like to be long continued. Consider it and be Wise. We have not many such to spare ; certainly then, it is our Prudence and Interest not to provoke the Lord to remove them. Again, let our high Esteem of them, be testified by an honourable Deference towards them : The Apostle Paul saith concerning them. *Rom. 13. 7. That Honour is to be rendered them. They are Gods, Psal. 82. 6.* And as such there

there is a Civil Worship and Reverence due to them, both in Word & Action. Speak no Evil of Dignities; Abhor that Unchristian way of Detraction, Backbiting and Slander. If they are God's Vicegerents, certainly it must be a Crying Sin and Shame for us thus to treat them. Do our Enemies charge us, that this is the way wherein we have been used to requite those that with greatest Pains, have travailed for the Publick good? Let us refute this Slander; and if we can do no more, yet at least, Let us Love & Honour such as have Rule over us.

3. *Take we Care that we don't make them, or provoke them to be other wise.* As they are sometimes Accessory to our Sins, when they either connive at us doing them, allow us in them, or indulge us afterwards; so shall we be to their Male-Administrations, if we seek to corrupt, discourage, pervert, and dishearten, or any way weaken them. There was a very Laudible Spirit in the People when they said to Ezra Chap. 10. 4. *Arise, This matter belongeth unto thee, we also will be with thee; be of good Courage & do it.* And that matter did accordingly Succeed very happily. But when there is a perverse Spirit of Dislike and Contradiction in us, to thwart the Counsels, and controul the Methods, of such as are intrusted with the Care of the Publick: if those Counsels prove abortive, and those Methods vain, it is no more than may reasonably be expected, and we may thank our selves for it.

4. I shall not exceed the Bounds of my Commission, (and I hope neither those of your Patience) if I put you in Remembrance, *That you be Subject to those that are set over you.* St Paul left this in Charge with Titus respecting his Cretians, Tit. 3. 1. And it is a Duty as Obvious to the light of Nature; so also, positively enjoyned us in the Word of God. Eccl. 8. 2. *I Counsel thee to keep the Kings Commandment, and that in regard of the Oath of*

What can be more Express than that of the Apostle Peter. *1 Pet. 2. 13, 14. Submit your selves to every ordinance of man, for the Lords sake, whether it be to the King as Supreme, or unto Governours, as unto them that are sent by them.* The General Precept of Obedience, the Apostle doth here particularly apply, with Respect to all Degrees of Authority, both *Supreme & Subordinate*: & so plainly declareth it to be the Mind of God. *v. 15. so is the Will of God*: That a man must Violate Reason & Conscience to gain say it. The Apostle Paul urgeth the same Duty, in his Epistle to the Romans: *Chap. 1. Let every Soul be subject unto the higher Powers.* And with that the Christians Obligation thereunto hath its originall from a Power, which no man can dispute but is utmost Peril. *v. 2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the Ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves Damnation.* We might argue, as the Apostle doth in the Context. *v. 4.* From the common good, which shall then flourish, when there is a spirit of Wisdom, Prudence & Judgment in those that rule, & of Subjection in others: & upon this Account, must needs be Subject (as the Apostle adds *v. 5.*) *not only for wrath, but for Conscience sake.* There are but few things that can rationally be pretended, to dispense with this Obligation: The *First* is, when the Commands of men do cross the Will of God. And the *Second* is, when the Authority commanding is not Legal. *As to the First.* It is a ruled Case, *Act. 5. 29. God is to be obeyed rather than men.* Active Obedience is due, where it may be with a safe Conscience; else not: yet here, All endeavours are to be carefully used, to assure our selves, that the Repugnancy which we conceive to be between vs Divine & Humane be not onely in our Imaginations; for otherwise, while we pretend to obey the Lord, refusing Obedience unto men, we shall be found

(which without doubt is the unhappy Condition of some) disobedient both to God & man. *As to the latter. viz.* The Illegality of the Authority Commanding : I shall only say, That whatever disputes there may be, about the various Methods that are in use among men, for the Designation of Persons to Places of Authority ; or about those that are Vested with Authority, whether they came rightly by it or no ; certainly, they that have the Liberty of Electing their own Rulers, have the least Reason to insist upon this Objection, against such as are of their own Choice ; or to hope that it will excuse, and be a Salve for their Disobedience

5. *Remember how expressly God hath required us, that we should yield them the Honour of Maintainance, as well as that of Respect & Obedience* And that there might be the less room for Dispute in a point which an avaritious and niggardly World, would be so ready to call in question : We have not only the Command it self, but the Reason of it annexed. *Rom. 13. 6, 7. For this cause pay you Tribute also, for they are Gods Ministers, attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom. Yea, we have this Duty enforced upon us, by the express Precept of Christ himself Mat 22. 21. Render therefore unto Cæsars the things which are Cæsars.* And our blessed Saviour chose rather to work a Miracle (whatever might have been pleaded for his own exemption) than omit the Duty, or offend by not doing it ; as you may see, *Mat 17 26, 27.* And if it were not for those natural Seeds of Rebellion which every man is the worse for, it would be a wonder that so plain a Precept and Duty should be so little regarded. And certainly, it will be as great a wonder if that Government that wants this Honourable Support, doth not finally sink under its own Burthen, with all that depends on it,

6. *Beware of Murmuring and Faction.* God is highly displeased with it; and can easily make us know it. We're ever to remember, that the condition of persons, as well as State of Affairs here below, won't admit of Perfection: and should consider that the Ablest Rulers on earth are men of many Infirmities, and subject to misdoing as well as others. If they miss it in some things, yet if in the main they are right, we have reason to bless God for it; and not to be dissatisfied: If we be the more our sin; and whoever gets by it, we are like to be ours. They that are pleased with nothing that is present; but are given to Change, when they have what they desired, do seldom sit easy under it. It was such a perverse humour among the People of Israel, that occasioned a Revolution in the Dayes of Samuel, which we read *1 Sam 8* But when it was effected; they that probably did as much desire it as any, soon thought they had little cause to boast of it. *1 Sam 10. 27.* But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us! & they despised him.

7. *Address the Throne of Grace in their Behalf, & pray earnestly, that God in mercy both to them and us, would grant them a Spirit of Wisdom and Judgment, Zeal and Sobriety; and make them men after his own heart, that they may rule us in the fear of God.* *1 Tim. 2 1, 2.* St. Paul Exports to this Duty. This indeed is to consult our greatest Good: We may then hope to lead quiet & peaceable lives, as he speaks, *v 2* Thus if we do, God will own us; for as in *v. 3.* This is good and acceptable in the sight of our God and Saviour.

8 Finally; *Let us put away all Iniquity far from us, & live in the Fear of God.* It is an awful Judgment not to have Strong Rods for Scepters to Rule us: Our Sins merit

The Lord sometimes threatens thus to punish the Iniquity of his people: When Israel had degenerated, &

their Religion, was become Formality, their Devotion Hypocrisy, the Lord saith, *Isa. 29. 14.* *The wisdom of their wise men shall perish.* Thus Samuel threatens the people: *1 Sam. 12. 25.* *But if ye shall still do wicked ye shall be consumed, both ye and your King.* When the Lord forsakes those that have the Rule of his people, no wonder if we have cause to complain, as in *Isa. 3. 12.* *Which lead thee cause thee to err;* but the Rule of this mischief is oftentimes in the wickedness of the people: when God left David to sin in numbring the People, *Sam. 24. 1.* it is said it was because Gods Anger was kindled against Israel; and you know what it is that kindled it: I think often then of Samuels advice to the people Israel, how they might obtain the Favour of God, upon their Rulers, and upon themselves. *1 Sam. 12. 24.* *Only Fear the Lord and Serve him in truth with all your heart.* If there be such a heart in us, if we will fear the Lord and walk humbly with him; If we will deny Ungodliness, and Serve the Lord in Truth, and with all our hearts; we may then hope that our Rodes shall be Strong and that those whom God shall this Day Set over us shall be greatly blessed of the Lord, and be rich in Blessings unto us.

To Conclude. Let us now look up to God, each of us in our respective Places, to give us Understanding in these things: What is wanting & what is weak among us, let us all as we are concerned, consider: Let us beg of God to supply us with what is lacking & let us be watchful, & strengthen the things that remain; if don't do so, the Prophet tells us what we may conclude; *1. Not only that it is now, but will still be more & more for a momentation. And to add no more;* if this course be not taken us; I dare say, that whatever Blessings of this kind, whereof we have heard at this time, are yet remaining among us, *They shall be removed into Corners; and the Places that know them, shall know them no more.*

